

October 24th Community Forum: Building respect...empowering youth

DAN GUTEKANST
HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Recently, over 70 community leaders gathered at Shrewsbury High School to discuss issues and concerns affecting our young people. The community forum, entitled "Building Respect...Empowering Youth" was organized by middle and high school parents, community members, and educators who invited Shrewsbury leaders who work with adolescents or whose programs and policies affect our young people to share insights and perspectives about how we can encourage and support young adults.

The forum had three goals:

- Gather as a community of leaders who are concerned about youth issues and connect with one another in a meaningful conversation and dialogue;
- Discuss youth issues, concerns, and possibilities openly and in a way that invites conversation and stimulates ideas;
- Leave the forum with a greater awareness about issues affecting young

adults and consider ways each participant's organization can refocus or redouble efforts to support young people in our community.

Dozens of parent leaders, public and private school educators, clergy, state and local government representatives, students, coaches, scouting officials, police officials, and representatives of the medical, business, law, and judicial professions participated in the forum which was designed to encourage open and candid conversations about issues facing teens.

Shrewsbury's Police Chief, Wayne Sampson, Shrewsbury School Committee Chair, Deborah Peeples, and Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services Director Jeff Chin, each shared opening remarks to begin the forum. After their preliminary remarks, other community leaders shared ideas and asked questions in what can best be characterized as a meaningful and honest exchange.

Several important issues were raised at the forum, including risky adolescent behavior; parental awareness, involve-

ment, and influence; and the lack of leadership among some of Shrewsbury's young people. Forum participants also wondered where young people, particularly middle school-aged youth, can go in town without being perceived to be troublemakers. Participants were asked to take what they learned back to their organizations so that, in turn, each organization can refocus their efforts to help build respect and empower young people.

The forum generated a significant amount of energy and interest among the participants who asked for another to be planned soon. The forum clearly demonstrated that when members of the community collaborate to solve problems or propose solutions, wonderful things can happen for our young people.

Thanks to Michael Brand, Penny McLaren, Deborah Peeples (parents), Patricia Degon (educator), and Jeff Chin for the skillful way in which they planned the forum. Another follow up forum is planned for January 24th at the high school.

MCAS results: 2005

JUDY EVANS
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

Introduction

The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is the statewide assessment system for public schools. MCAS measures student, school, and district performance on a rigorous set of academic learning standards set forth in the Curriculum Frameworks.

It is difficult to make rank-order comparisons with other districts, since the Department of Education does not release ranked data. Comparisons can only be made on percentages of students who pass the tests or percentages of students scoring in the advanced and proficient categories. In 2005 Shrewsbury students ranked in the top 18-26% of all districts, depending on the test/grade level.

On the following tests the percentage of students scoring in the advanced/proficient performance categories increased: Grade 3 Reading, Grade 5 Science/Technology, Grade 6 Math, Grade 10 Language Arts. The percentage of students scoring in the advanced/proficient performance categories remained the same for Grade 10 Math. On the remaining tests (Grade 4 ELA, Grade 4 Math, Grade 7 ELA, Grade 8 Science/Technology) the percentage of students in the advanced/proficient performance categories decreased slightly, although in most cases more students scored in the advanced category than the year before.

General Results

Significant areas of improvement were seen in the following tests/grade levels:

➤ Grade 3 Reading, where students in the Failing category decreased to 1% and Proficient students rose from 73% to 78%.

➤ Grade 4 English/Language Arts, where student in the Advanced category rose from 15% to 19%, while Failing students fell from 6% to 5%.

➤ Grade 5 Science/Technology, where 2% more students scored in the Advanced category.

➤ Grade 10 Math, which saw very significant improvement in the percentages of students who scored in the Advanced category, moving from 48% to 54%.

➤ Grade 10 English/language arts, where the percentage of students scoring in the Advanced category increased from 41% to 48%.

Next Steps

The district has already taken steps to address issues identified through the initial analysis of the 2004 MCAS results. Some of these steps include:

➤ Analysis of results by curriculum coordinators, specialists, and department directors with resulting program changes

➤ Creation of school-level goals to support MCAS improvement at all levels

➤ Continuation of the grant-funded MCAS school year program for high school students

➤ Exploration of privately funded programs to provide additional support for elementary and middle school at-risk students

➤ Full implementation of the Everyday Math program for K-6 students

➤ Improved math professional development through participation in the Central MA Math Collaborative, where district personnel continue to attend math training for administrators and teachers through a grant-funded collaborative program

➤ Continued participation in middle-level math and science teacher education through the Pipeline grant

We are proud of the high levels of achievement of our students on the MCAS tests and will continue to strive to meet the state and federal mandate of helping all students to achieve proficiency by 2014.

District recognizes 28 staff at reception

THOMAS KENNEDY
DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

On Monday, November 7th, twenty-eight educators from the district were recognized for their recent attainment of Professional Status with the Shrewsbury Public Schools. Professional Status is awarded to teachers who have demonstrated excellence to the Shrewsbury Public Schools through their work and commitment to students. A teacher is eligible to receive professional status after three full years of work in the district during which time the individual is thoroughly evaluated, on an annual basis, in all facets of their performance.

While professional status is universal in all public schools in Massachusetts, the Shrewsbury Public Schools is among a small group of districts in the state that recognize this important achievement through a formal reception. This year's event was held at the Hoagland-Pincus Conference Center, which is located on the Shrewsbury campus of the University of Massachusetts Medical School on Maple Avenue.

This year's recognition of twenty-eight individuals is symbolic of the growth the district has witnessed. When this group of honorees interviewed for their positions in the spring of 2002 there were 5100 students in the district. As these twenty-eight educators commence their fourth year of teaching in the district the student population has risen to 5900 students, an increase of 800 students!

A special "thank you" is extended to the district's PTO groups and the Shrewsbury Education Association, who join the school department as co-sponsors of the event. Each person receiving professional status was individually recognized and received a small gift to remember the occasion. The reception was well attended as nearly one hundred people, including building principals, assistant principals, department directors, SEA officers, central office administrators, the entire school committee, and PTO representatives from the schools joined the honorees and their personal guests. The event included a formal recognition program along with an opportunity for the attendees to enjoy the company of one another and sample a variety of delicious hors d'oeuvres.

The staff recognized this year along with their teaching area: **High School:** Christina MacDonald- English, Nancy



PHOTO BY SUE CONLEY

Above, Coolidge School Staff, Rosann Silver, grade 1; Margery Clark, Principal, and Gina Ruggieri, occupational therapist. Below, Floral Street staff from left to right are Angela Meomartino, grade 1; Patricia Padilla, Asst Principal; Joe Sawyer, Principal; Ken Avery, grade 1, and Joan Beall, grade 3.



PHOTO BY SUSAN LUCEY

Lowery-Mathematics, Carolyn Sherman - Special Education, Gail Puris - Special Education, Andrew Smith - Social Studies, Jammie Zona-Guidance. **Sherwood Middle School:** - Stephanie Roszko - Grade Five Math/Science, Stephanie Sullivan - Special Education, Susan Hirsh - Special Education, Andriana Anderson-Foreign Language. **Oak Middle School:** Timothy Kewriga - Grade Eight Social Studies, Stephen Winters - Special Education. **Beal Early Childhood Center:** Allison Menovitch - School Psychologist, Darcy Messineo - Speech Therapist. **Coolidge School:** Rosann Silver - Grade One; **Floral Street School:** Kenneth Avery

- Grade One, Joan Beall -Grade Three, Angela Meomartino - Grade One; **Spring Street School:** Ruth Cook - Grade Four, Donna Rice - Grade One. **Parker Road Pre-School:** Jennifer Vangel - Pre-school; Paton School: Barbara Connolly - Grade Four; District-wide: Deborah Bonneau - Music; Catherine Burgholzer - Health Education. In addition, the district recognized Judith Evans - Assistant Superintendent; Stephen Lobban - Principal, Oak Middle School; Pamela Johnson - Nurse, Shrewsbury High School; Gina Ruggieri - Occupational Therapist for their commitment to the district as they also completed three years of service.